

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04

SIL-01 OMB-01 /093 W

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P R 132229Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9135

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 5434

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE MOOD IN COLOMBIA AT WEEK'S END WAS PROBABLY A MIXED ONE OF PERPLEXITY AND RELIEF. PERPLEXITY BECAUSE PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S ACTION IN PROCLAIMING A PARTIAL STATE OF SIEGE CAME AFTER THE WORST OF THE DISORDERS SEEMED TO HAVE PASSED, AND THAT LOPEZ HAD MARRED HIS ADMINISTRATION'S IMAGE OF TOLERANCE AND MAXIMUM FREEDOM WITHOUT DUE CAUSE. (WHILE BOGOTA WAS NOT UNDER A STATE OF SIEGE--SEE BELOW--EMBASSY OFFICERS OBSERVED UNUSUAL DEPLOYMENTS OF POLICE AND TROOPS IN THE CITY ON THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 13.) IF COLOMBIANS WERE PUZZLED THEY WERE ALSO RELIEVED BY THE ACTION, WHICH PROBABLY MET A PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED BY MANY FOR SOME DECISIVE GOVERNMENT ACTION WHICH MIGHT IMPROVE SECURITY. THERE HAS BEEN, AS FAR AS CAN BE DETERMINED IN THE ABSENCE OF POLLS AND SURVEYS ON THE SUBJECT, A GROWING FEELING OF UNEASE AND INSECURITY AMONG COLOMBIANS AS A RESULT OF AN INCREASE IN CRIME, RECENT DIFFICULTIES INVOLVING THE MILITARY AND STUDENTS, AND PERHAPS MORE GENERALLY THE FAILURE OF THE

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LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF DECISIVENESS AND

SELF-CONFIDENCE. SOME ADMINISTRATION DEFENDERS IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS HAVE CONCEDED A FORMER IMAGE OF WEAKNESS BUT CLAIM THAT THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE MILITARY AND STUDENTS HAVE CHANGED ALL THAT. THE PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF SIEGE, EVEN THOUGH PARTIAL, WILL PROBABLY REASSURE MANY AS TO LOPEZ'S WILLINGNESS TO ACT IN A DECISIVE, IF NOT TIMELY FASHION. A PUBLIC MOOD OF UNCERTAINTY, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE WHILE STUDENT AND LABOR DIFFICULTIES REMAIN UNRESOLVED AND, IN THE LONG TERM, THE ECONOMY CONTINUES TO AIL. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT LOPEZ SURPRISES NATION WITH PARTIAL STATE OF SIEGE. AFTER HOLDING THE POSSIBILITY OF A STATE OF SIEGE IN ABEYANCE DURING THE THREE-DAY PERIOD OF STUDENT AND LABOR DEMONSTRATIONS, JUNE 9-11, PRESIDENT LOPEZ APPARENTLY SURPRISED PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE NATION, INCLUDING THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE, BY IMPOSING A STATE OF SIEGE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ANTIOQUIA, ATLANTICO, AND VALLE LATE JUNE 12. (BOGOTA 5412). EARLIER ON THE SAME DAY, MINISTER OF DEFENSE ABRAHAM VARON VALENCIA HAD TOLD THE PRESS THAT "FOR THE MOMENT, THERE WILL NOT BE A STATE OF SIEGE". THE DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT, WHICH CAME AFTER MEETING SEVERAL HOURS WITH THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, APPEARED BAFFLING. THE STATED GENERAL REASONS (SEE REF) HAD EXISTED FOR QUITE SOME TIME, AND PEACE HAD RETURNED TO ANTIOQUIA AND ATLANTICO AFTER TWO DAYS OF VIOLENCE DURING WHICH THE PRESIDENT OBVIOUSLY WAS RELUCTANT TO TAKE THE STEP. IT HARDLY SEEMED THAT THE VIOLENCE IN CALI (VALLE) ON JUNE 12, WHICH WAS NO WORSE THAN THAT IN MEDELLIN PREVIOUSLY, REQUIRED A STATE OF SIEGE, PARTICULARLY FROM A PRESIDENT WHO WISHED TO PRESERVE HIS CENTER-LEFT AND "TOLERANT" IMAGE. YET, THIS APPEARS TO BE EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED. AT ANY RATE, MANY COLOMBIANS WHO BELIEVE THAT SECURITY IN COLOMBIA HAS BEEN DETERIORATING, PROBABLY FELT SOMEWHAT RELIEVED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL ACTION. IT WAS NOT CLEAR BY WEEK'S END WHETHER OR NOT THE EXTREME LEFT WOULD CHALLENGE THE GOC'S ACTION. NEVERTHELESS, AT LEAST TWO IMMEDIATE, POTENTIAL PROBLEMS EXISTED. THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) WAS PLANNING A "NATION-WIDE TWENTY-FOUR HOUR SYMPATHY STRIKE" IN SUPPORT OF CEMENT WORKERS, WHO HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE FOR NEARLY 40 DAYS, AND WHOSE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMPANIES APPEAR TO BE DEADLOCKED. THE DATE OF THE SYMPATHY STRIKE WAS NOT ANNOUNCED. THE OTHER POTENTIAL CHALLENGE TO THE GOC WAS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RALLY OF THE NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE PARTY (ANAPO) SCHEDULED FOR BOGOTA AND OTHER CITIES THE EVENING OF JUNE 13.

3. ANAPO ORGANIZES DEMONSTRATIONS. THE NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO), COLOMBIA'S THIRD LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY, HAS ORGANIZED MARCHES AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAJOR CITIES FOR THE AFTER-NOON OF THE JUNE 13. THE EVENTS MARK THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE RISE TO POWER OF GENERAL ROJAS PINILLA IN 1953, FOLLOWING A

MILITARY COUP WHICH OUSTED THE CONSERVATIVE PRESIDENT LAUREANO GOMEZ. ANAPO SUPPORTERS WILL ALSO COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMAL ORGANIZATION OF ANAPO AS A PARTY IN 1971. ANAPO, AN OUTGROWTH OF THE POPULIST MOVEMENT LED BY GENERAL ROJAS, HAS RAPIDLY DECLINED IN POPULARITY AND IMPORTANCE SINCE ITS VERY STRONG SHOWING IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1970. WIDESPREAD DEFECTIONS OF POLITICIANS AND SUPPORTERS HAVE DRASTICALLY REDUCED THE PARTY'S FOLLOWING. RECENT CONFLICTS WITHIN ANAPO, NOW LED BY ROJAS' DAUGHTER MARIA EUGENIA BETWEEN MODERATES AND EXTREME LEFTISTS HAVE HINDERED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLEAR DIRECTION BEYOND THE GENERAL CALL FOR NATIONAL SOCIALISM. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY SOURCES THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE AN ATTEMPT TO REKINDLE SUPPORT FOR THE PARTY AND TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF THAT SUPPORT. OTHER MOVES PLANNED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE ARE THE REVIVAL OF THE ANAPO NEWSPAPER ALERTA AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MORE POWERFUL RADIO STATION. CURRENT DISCONTENT WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION MAY SPARK SOME NEW ENTHUSIASM FOR ANAPO, BUT THE OUTLOOK FOR THE RE-CREATION OF ANAPO AS A POWERFUL THIRD FORCE IN POLITICS IS VERY DIM.

4. ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN MAY BE PROLONGED. AS TENTATIVE DATA ON FIRST QUARTER ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE BECOME AVAILABLE MANY OBSERVERS ARE REVISING DOWNWARD THEIR PROJECTIONS OF COLOMBIAN AND GDP GROWTH FOR 1975. PRELIMINARY FIRST QUARTER DATA SUGGEST

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9136

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 5434

A DECLINE IN REAL INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT STEMMING FROM HEAVY INVENTORY ACCUMULATION DURING 1974. RETAIL SALES ALSO APPARENTLY REGISTERED A SLIGHT DECLINE DURING THE FIRST QUARTER AND NEW PRIVATE INVESTMENT HAS FALLEN OFF SHARPLY, AS HAVE IMPORT APPLICATIONS FOR CAPITAL GOODS. ALTHOUGH AGRICULTURE APPEARS TO BE DOING WELL AND EXPORTS SHOW SOME RECUPERATION, MANY OBSERVERS ARE REDUCING THE REAL GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR 1975 TO ABOUT 2 PERCENT VERSUS AN EARLIER 4-5 PERCENT LEVEL.

5. EXPECTATIONS NOW ARE THAT THE RECESSION WILL BE PROLONGED THROUGH AT LEAST THE THIRD QUARTER. ECONOMIC CRITICISM OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION IS INCREASING SIGNIFICANTLY AND OVER-ALL CONFIDENCE REMAINS LOW. THIS DISENCHANTMENT STEMS IN PART FROM EXPECTATIONS AROUSED DURING CAMPAIGN ORATORY WHICH HAVE NOT (AND PROBABLY COULD NOT) BE RAPIDLY FULFILLED. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, IS THE FACT THAT FOLLOWING AN INITIAL BURST OF FISCAL AND MONETARY REFORMS THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION IS MOVING VERY SLOWLY IN FORMULATING SPECIFIC PROGRAMS TO IMPLEMENT ITS DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

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6. PROMOTIONS IN THE MILITARY. SEVERAL SURPRISING PROMOTIONS WERE ANNOUNCED THIS WEEK IN THE ARMED FORCES. THE PRESIDENT, IN MAKING THESE PROMOTIONS IS APPARENTLY CHANGING THE ORDER OF PRECEDENCE WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. PREVIOUSLY THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES WAS FOLLOWED BY THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY AND THEN THE CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF. IN PROMOTING M/GEN ARTURO LOMBANO CUERVO, CHIEF OF THE JOINT STAFF, TO FULL GENERAL, LOPEZ HAS MADE THIS POSITION THE THIRD RANKING. OTHER PROMOTIONS WERE V/ADM JAIME BARRERA LARRARTE, COMMANDER OF THE NAVY, THE FULL ADMIRAL AND M/GEN FEDERICO RINCON PUENTES, COMMANDER OF THE AF, TO FULL GENERAL. BOTH WERE SIGNIFICANT IN THAT ADM. BARRERA IS ONLY THE THIRD IN THIS RANK IN THE HISTORY OF THE NAVY AND GENERAL RINCON IS THE FIRST AF GENERAL TO ATTAIN THIS RANK. IT IS NOW POSSIBLE TO APPOINT THESE OFFICERS AS SUCCESSORS TO MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEN. VARON VALENCIA OR COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL HERRERA CALDERON SHOULD EITHER OF THESE OFFICIALS RETIRE. SUCH A MOVE, HOWEVER, WOULD CAUSE EVEN MORE DISSATISFACTION IN THE ARMY WHICH TRADITIONALLY HAS HELD THESE POSITIONS.

7. CUBAN TRADE MISSION VISITS COLOMBIA (SEE BOGOTA A-42). A CUBAN TRADE MISSION, HEADED BY TRADE POLICY DIRECTOR ARNOLD RODRIGUEZ, ARRIVED MONDAY AND SPENT THREE DAYS IN BOGOTA BEFORE MOVING ON TO CALI AND MEDELLIN. THE DELEGATES DECIDED THAT

COLOMBO-CUBAN TRADE WILL BE FREE AND UNPLANNED, IN CONTRAST TO THE COMPENSATION AGREEMENTS THAT GOVERN COLOMBIA'S TRADE WITH OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. THE PRODUCTS MENTIONED FOR TRADE WERE THE SAME CITED IN REF AIRGRAM. DETAILS OF TALKS TO FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.

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